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Coming From Sounds of Blackness: Exploring the Effects of Hip-Hop on Views of Race

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COMING FROM SOUNDS OF BLACKNESS:

EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF HIP-HOP ON VIEWS OF RACE

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ABSTRACT

COMING FROM SOUNDS OF BLACKNESS: EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF HIP-HOP ON VIEWS OF RACE

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Does the individual's frequency of listening to hip-hop music have an effect on whether or not s/he believes in a color-blind ideology? Using data from a 25-item questionnaire given to 165 participants drawn for a sample from an urban California college, this study tested six hypotheses in order to determine if such a connection exists. Results revealed that individuals who frequently listened to misogynistic rap were less likely to believe that race is a convenient way to categorize individuals, controlling for race, sex, and income. Thus, individuals who had a higher frequency of listening to hip-hop were less likely to have a color-blind ideology. These results contribute to theoretical views about notions of race and cultural practices by showing that hip-hop music listeners, to some extent, take an active role in shaping their views of race.

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Introduction

Color-blind ideology, the insistence that all racial and ethnic groups are equal, is the most current and popular racial ideology in America today (Frankenberg 1993). According to Rodriquez (2006), color-blind ideology is a flexible set of ideas that is used in various ways to deny the reality of inequality. It uses intangible and liberal notions of equality (e.g., equal opportunity for all) in order to separate race from the power structures in which racial discourses and inequality are rooted. An example of this would be the claim that all individuals can achieve success in the United States. A person who would make the claim that s/he is denied certain privileges because of his/her race would only be making excuses for his/her lack of success. A recent example addressing color-blind ideology can be found in the controversy behind the shooting of a 17-year-old African American male named Trayvon Martin by a 28-year-old multi-racial Hispanic American named George Zimmerman. Some individuals argue that this young man was murdered based on his appearance of being an African American wearing a hooded sweatshirt. Supporters of a color-blind ideology would claim that his physical appearance had nothing to do with him being shot, and the reasoning should focus more on the fact that he was walking in a particular neighborhood at a suspicious time. Indeed, the claim of having a color-blind ideology is often met with much opposition, especially by individuals who believe that the ills of racism still exist. The music genre of hip-hop has had a history of exposing the masses to experiences of racial inequality and discrimination.

The title of this research was sampled from the song, "I Have A Dream" by Chicago-based hip-hop artist Common. Common states in his song, "Born on the Black list, told I'm below average, a life with no cabbage, that's no money if you're from where I'm from… I hold the same fight that made Martin Luther the King" (Lynn 2006, track 1). Here, Common addresses his experience of race as one that brought forth much struggle both psychologically and economically. This song captures hip-hop in its finest form of social commentary and focuses on race as a main component of struggle and social inequality. Hip-hop music was created in the late 1970s, primarily by African Americans and Puerto Ricans, to combat frustrations of economic turmoil and racial discrimination (Chang 2005)). Early hip-hop lyrics reveal these sentiments placing race at the central focus for the artist. To this day, race continues to be a major issue and area of focus among many hip-hop artists. How then can an individual claim to have a color-blind ideology when the music of hip-hop firmly suggests that race continues to be the source of much discrimination and social inequality?

This study explored the intersection of race and hip-hop by examining how a person's attitude about race may change based on how frequently that person listens to hip-hop genres. Specifically, I sought to determine whether listening to hip-hop would have an effect on having a color-blind ideology. Thus a survey comparing major racial-ethnic groups with respect to racial attitudes and the frequency with which these ethnic groups listen to hip-hop genres was distributed. I used a multiple regression to analyze competing hypotheses related to the effects of listening to hip-hop genres on attitudes on race (finding racial humor to be entertaining; believing race is a convenient way to

categorize individuals; acknowledging the race of the individual upon first sight; believing that one has a racially diverse group of friends; and believing that race does not exist). In this study, I analyzed pertinent studies on the sociology of music, hip-hop, theoretical perspectives on everyday notions of race, and the relationship between these notions with the individual's frequency of listening to hip-hop genres.

Literature Review

Historical Conceptualization of Race

Much research has contributed to the conceptualization of race. According to Cruz and Duplass (2009), race is ingrained in the minds of many Americans as a reasonable way to distinguish the different peoples of the world. However, very few know the concept's origins. Religious movements, biological sciences, and social sciences have all contributed to the early foundations of our modern understandings of race. Regardless of the nature of race, almost all individuals have an experience with it. Even individuals who are literally blind have an understanding of what race is (Obasogie 2010). Conversations regarding race generate the possibility of having a clearer understanding of its nature. Racial narratives–an individual's discussion of his/her own personal experience with an individual of another race–have done more than help individuals to understand the world through racialized experiences; they have also validated current racial inequality through the disclosure of firsthand experiences, thus confirming its continuing presence in the world. Racial narratives have not only attempted to explain larger racial realities but have been able to shaped everyday interactions and behaviors (Silva, Lewis, & Embrick 2004).

It is not possible to observe race without including particular ideas of racism. According to Garcia (2010), racism has been understood to be a mind-set some individuals have toward members of racial groups. Having a negative attitude toward one race implies having a positive attitude for another race. For example, some one who has a negative attitude toward White people may also have a positive attitude toward some other race (e.g., Black people). Martin (2009) found that two primary kinds of racism could be distinguished: own-race-absent racism and own-race-present racism. In own-race-absent racism, the race of the individual presenting racist sentiments assumes a major role in that person's racist thinking. However, in own-race-absent racism it does not.

It is important to compliment this historical conceptualization of race with theoretical foundations of race relations in order to have a well-rounded understanding. The next section of this literature review explores these theoretical foundations of race relations.

Theoretical Foundation of Race Relations

Sociologists have developed various theories on race and racial-ethnic relations. Key theories on race and racial-ethnic relations pertinent to this study include theories on (1) assimilation, (2) internal colonialism, and (3) color-blind ideology.

Assimilation: Anglo-conformity, melting pot, and cultural pluralism. One prominent expression of assimilation is *racial conformity*. Gordon (1964) defines racial conformity as giving up one's cultural patterns for those of the dominant or host group. Submission to cultural patterns can be understood by observing the way in which new

groups must conform to the existing Anglo-Protestant culture in the United States (Gordon 1964). Another expression of assimilation is through the idea of the *melting pot*. In this expression, immigrants to the United States would lose their ethnic and racial identities as they mixed together in one new American blend. Under this theory, all immigrants are expected to take up middle-class American values such as sacrifice, sobriety, hard work, and self-reliance (Gordon 1964). Another theory on race and racial-ethnic relations is *cultural pluralism* or *multiculturalism*. According to Kallen (1956), each ethnic group has the democratic right to preserve its own cultural heritage without being forced to assimilate to the dominant culture. Under this theory, immigrants adapt to the host society but also hold onto their original culture. Thus, an individual would adopt middle-class American values and speak English when interacting with other individuals in public; however, the language and customs from that individual's place of origin could be practiced in more private instances or in communities that worked to preserve the culture.

Internal colonialism. Recent analyses of racial oppression combine class stratification and internal colonialism. According to Ball (2010), the main basis of internal colonialism is an interactive structure of racial and class stratification that divides the United States. In other words, the dominant class (i.e., capitalists) in the United States survives by routinely subordinating lower individuals on the socio-economic scale for the sake of profit.

This study focused on hip-hop music, as it was created in response to such internal colonialism. It is a tool created by marginalized individuals to express

frustrations toward economic subordination, sometimes with the intent for radical action. Further elaboration on hip-hop music will be provided later in this thesis.

Color-blind ideology. One of the major and most recent theories regarding race and racialization is that of color-blind ideology. Color-blind ideology is the denial that race remains the basis of discrimination and social inequality. The main components of color-blind ideology are (a) using ideas tied with political liberalism (e.g., equal opportunity) and economic liberalism (e.g., individualism, choice) in ways that ignore multiple institutional practices behind segregation and that disregard any concern about the negative consequence that these practices have on minorities; (b) explaining away racial phenomena by suggesting they occur naturally; (c) relying on culturally based arguments such as "Blacks have too many babies" or "Mexicans do not care much about education" to explain the unfavorable situations of minorities in society; and (d) suggesting that discrimination has long since been a central factor affecting the life chances of minorities ("There is discrimination, but there are plenty of jobs available" or "It's better today than it was in the past") (Bonilla-Silva 1997: 28-29*)*. Drawing from a sample of 269 White individuals, Carr (1997) found that only 23 percent claimed not to be color-blind. However, in a sample of 105 African Americans, 60 percent claimed not to be color-blind (Carr 1997). Thus, attitudes regarding color-blind ideology differ when the race of the individual is taken into consideration.

While racism may not always be so overtly expressed, this does not mean it does not exist. Racism is often equated with violence and segregation. Thus, many believe that the type of racism that hurts Blacks no longer exists and that Black people who are

willing to work hard enough are well off, maybe better than they deserve and certainly much better than plenty of White people (Cose 1997). According to Cose (1997), a color-blind ideology serves more as a silencer than a racial equalizer. It is a way of suppressing the continuing racial stratification of society and a way of feeling good about the fact that the majority of elites in the world are white. In other words, it becomes a way of justifying the very inequality it claims to remedy. Indeed, covert forms of racism are expressed through a color-blind ideology. The next section of this literature will focus on the importance of music from a sociological perspective.

The Sociology of Music

The sociology of culture emphasizes the importance of studying the production, circulation, and reception of symbolic artifacts of everyday life and the meaning-systems associated with these materials. These artifacts range from religious rituals, knowledge-structures, and popular forms of culture that include the mass media and music. In terms of music, cultural sociologists (Frith 1988; Bennett 2000; Martin, Herbert, and Middleton 2003) examined the significance of:

- The political economy of the music industry in national and global capitalist contexts.
- The varied relationship between musical forms (from chords to genres to use of technological media), musical content (including lyrics), and musicians (as artists, lyricists, and performers).
- The images and representation of social groups through musical forms and content.

- The reception of these forms, content, and musicians by varied audiences and publics, and how this receptiveness shapes social attitudes and identities of audiences
- The effect of music on certain aspects on social life including social inequality and the possible promotion of violence.

As a consequence, some sociologists of music (Denisoff & Bridges 1983; Bennett 2000; Flores 2000; Sullivan 2003; Clay 2006; Riley 2006) focus much attention on understanding how listening to music can be a racialized and cultural activity and can shape the racialized attitudes and identities of music listeners.

Prior studies highlight that (1) certain musical genres and artifacts can serve as a representation of particular times in a society, (2) listening to certain songs and musical genres shapes social identities, and (3) certain songs and musical genres shape social attitudes related to race and perceptions of race.

Previous research shows that observing music can allow individuals to understand the state of a society at a given space and time. American jazz, for example, has been regarded as a pure representation of American democracy. It is "a music built on individualism and compromise, independence and cooperation" (*Weschester County Business Journal* 2005: S18). Leonard (2007) found that not only do individuals with high interest and participation in music tend to use music-related material (e.g., old records, music sheets) as a way to identify their lives, but also particular music performances have become defined as significant cultural moments appearing to represent, act out, or embody the changing cultural and social contexts in which they took

place (Leonard 2007). Music, therefore, can be understood as a means to define not only the identity of individuals, but moments of societal change as well.

Listening to certain songs and musical genres can shape social identities. Further, in order to understand music, one must make observations about the space and time in which the music was created. According to Rotter-Broman (2006), by studying music one gains an understanding of the social setting in which it was created. Included in this social setting can be experiences of race. Kruse (2010) revealed that the broadcasting of music helped create and reinforce ideas that unique, local identities and sounds truly existed. Such dissemination allowed individuals to fuse and blend the new sounds to which they were being exposed with their own regional sounds. Harrison (2010) adds that place-specific forms of music, whether the rap music of America's inner-city ghettos or California surfer rock, can only be created by the influence of one's social and physical surroundings. The autobiographical nature of music delivers an understanding of the communities from where it was initially created.

Music can be utilized to gain more of an understanding of how individuals view race. Samporano (2009) found that although musical style and taste are not firmly predetermined by race, ethno-racial groups often gravitate toward music of which they feel they have ownership. One type of music that is often connected with this feeling of ownership is hip-hop. Because much of hip-hop music focuses on the experiences of racial minorities, many racial minority listeners feel there is a personal connection between themselves and the artists. According to Krohn and Suazo (1995), many minority group members and teenagers view rappers as their spokesperson because of the

blunt expressions of their frustrations and their ability to speak in street language. Such street language usually depicts the least socially desirable elements of urban life including illegal drugs, misogyny, and violence (Krohn & Suazo 1995). The next section of this literature review focuses more on hip-hop from a sociological point of view.

The Sociology of Hip-Hop Music

According to Chang (2005), hip-hop music is often acknowledged for giving a voice to a generation of mostly Black and Puerto Rican youth who experienced growing up in New York City during harsh economic times and conditions of poverty in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Early hip-hop music exposed the nation to these harsh conditions and allowed individuals who were not familiar with the experience of racial marginalization to, at the very least, hear about it in the form of song and lyric. In a sense, hip-hop music brought to the nation a form of consciousness that was not popularly expressed (Chang 2005).

Writings about hip-hop reveal its place in the Black experience. According to Alridge and Stewart (2005), it is important for scholars to expand effort in preserving and identifying artifacts that document the evolution of hip-hop, gather oral histories of hip-hop, and develop historically derived and flexible frameworks through which to observe hip-hop. Doing so will not only contribute to the scholarly discourse about hip-hop but will also assist in preserving the culture and music for generations to come. Hip-hop generation scholars have been encouraged to assume the role of *academic MC* and to create dialogue between the hip-hop generation and the civil rights generation,

specifically Black individuals who participated in either of the two movements (Dagbovie 2005; Aldridge 2005).

In general, sociological studies on hip-hop have examined the particularities of hip-hop music in terms of its relationship to mainstream and alternative music industries; the relationship between its forms, content, performers, and audiences; its images, messages, and representation; its effect on various aspects of social life; and its relationship in shaping social identities and attitudes (Gilroy 1991; Hall & Jefferson 1993; Rose 1994; Perkins 1996; Hall 1997; Flores 2000; Dimitriadis 2001; Clay 2003; Sullivan 2003; Forman & Neal 2004; Riley 2006; Clay 2006; Clay 2008; Clay 2011; Chang 2005; George 1999; Perry 2004; Watkins 2005; Kelley 1994; Dyson 2007; Ogbar 2007; Reeves 2009).

Notably, some studies highlight the relationship between certain hip-hop songs and genres and the development and influence of progressive social movements at local and international levels. According to Giordano (1999), because much of hip-hop tends to reflect the social realities of racism and the seeming hopelessness of many *Generation X* individuals, these individuals have been drawn to social movements that attempt to break down racial barriers nationwide and use hip-hop imagery, lyrics, and style as a way to provide themselves with an empowering voice. For instance, Tanner, Asbridge, and Wortley (2009) provided evidence that individuals who frequently listen to hip-hop were more likely to empathize feelings of inequity and injustice directed toward racial minorities. Furthermore, Furtell, Simi, and Gottshalk (2006) showed that hip-hop could serve as a tool for organizing and a crucial activity for various movement occasions that

move beyond local, translocal, and virtual movement contexts. As such, individuals may use hip-hop music to criticize concrete practices that have caused social ills within society. Stroeken (2005) added that producing such conscious music allows rappers to encourage audiences to confront structures of power.

At present, no sociological research has explicitly studied the effects of listening to hip-hop music on individual attitudes regarding a color-blind ideology. Therefore, this study examines the connection between listening to hip-hop music and attitudes toward race. It draws attention to the racialized attitudes of hip-hop listeners and non-listeners, given the explicit racialized messages in the lyrics of hip-hop music as compared to most mainstream American music. In other words, much of hip-hop music contains messages regarding race that expose the masses to experiences of racial discrimination and inequality, something rarely heard in mainstream music. This study sought to determine if these racialized messages have an effect on the racialized attitudes of listeners. More specifically, this study sought to determine whether listening to hip-hop has an effect on support for a color-blind ideology.

Linking the Role of Entertainment Value in Racial Humor and Hip-Hop Music

Much research has been dedicated to understanding the role that the entertainment value of racial humor has on attitudes toward race. According to Leap and Smeltzer (2001), jokes regarding racial groups make up one of the most prevalent forms of humor. Being able to have a sense of humor about race shows hope of being able to discuss race openly (Howells 2006). Hasenaur (1998) found joke-telling often creates a space to generate discussions regarding the effects of racially prejudicial talk. Furthermore, when

controversial issues regarding race are brought forth under the cloak of humor, individuals are more likely to participate in racial discussions. Goodwin (1995) added that racial humor has helped certain societies open up and confront sensitive issues dealing with race that would often be considered politically incorrect. Analyzing racial jokes can provide an understanding on both the relationships between the historical and cultural context that makes a particular racial group become the target of such jokes and the individuals who take part in the act of telling the joke (Popescu 2010).

Weaver (2010) reveals that the insecure language of comedy could encourage and support reverse discourse and anti-racism. In fact, old sketches and tales created during the turn of the 20th century used racial humor to challenge the constraints of race. The use of humor often provided writers a safe way to portray black slaves as chivalrous and humanitarian (Piacentino 2000). Another form of entertainment that creates a space for individuals to focus on issues dealing with race is hip-hop music.

Lyrics in hip-hop often reveal the experiences of inner-city individuals and unfair treatment that would usually be overlooked by mainstream society. Alridge (2005) found that while conventional American culture praises the White, middle-class, hard working individual, hip-hop artists, such as KRS-One of the South Bronx, offer a contemptuous critique of the "Eurocentric" American system demanding more historically accurate portrayals of African Americans in all forms of media from television to textbooks (Alridge 2005). Artists like KRS-One show that African Americans are in a racial category that has its own experiences distinct from that of the conventional Anglo-American.

This expression of social frustration is a key component of hip-hop music and can be heard throughout the world. Reiter and Mitchell (2008) found that Brazilian hip-hop music has maintained a strong role in shaping the racial consciousness among younger generations of Afro-Brazilians. The messages often heard in Brazilian hip-hop reveal the harsh conditions of the *favelas* (slums) to the broader Brazilian society (Reiter & Mitchell 2008). According to Tickner (2008), in Latin America, hip-hop allowed a linguistic base for writing lyrics and addressing concerns such as violence and the hardships of street life, both with which many marginalized individuals in Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico could identify. In a study to consider the musical influences of American rap on South Africa's hip-hop culture, Khan (2007) found that the artistic output of American artists, such as Tupac, showed that the themes of drug abuse, sex, crime, and the quest for a world free from violence were universally recurrent.

Both comedy and hip-hop music are forms of entertainment. In order to be entertained by comedy, one must understand the context in which the comedic element exists. When race is the focal point of comedy, one must understand the racial context of the joke. Hip-hop music is also a form of entertainment that has often used race as its focal point. When listening to rapper KRS-One exclaim, "I don't walk this way to portray or reinforce stereotypes of today. Like all my brothers eat chicken or watermelon, talk broken English and [are] drug selling" (Parker 1988, track 1), one must understand that Black individuals in America have often been stereotyped based on participation of these activities, and KRS-One uses hip-hop to weaken such stereotypes. This example shows that just as comedians discuss racial differences through the

entertainment medium of comedy, rappers use hip-hop as an entertainment medium to discuss racial differences as well. Thus, this research sought to analyze the connection between listening to hip-hop music and attitudes about racial humor.

Linking Race as a Convenient Way to Categorize Individuals and Hip-Hop Music

Much research has been dedicated to understanding race as a way to categorize individuals. According to Haines (2008), race, as a category of identity, often overlaps the notion of ethnicity in the United States. In fact, race is sometimes substituted for ethnicity as "ethnic" identity. Weeks and Vincent (2007) add that race is often assumed to be a primary tool for categorization, with other categories (e.g., religion, gender) assuming a supplemental role. In their study to determine whether or not six- and seven-year-olds have a concept of race and whether race is a relevant category, Vora and England (2000) found that most children in the United States were likely to categorize images of individuals by race. Race appeared to be the most relevant category to the children in their study because it was the most frequently selected and the first categorization used by the children. Thus, one may conclude that individuals learn to see others through the category of race very early. Race, as a category, is often connected with racial stereotypes, or preconceived characteristics attributed to individuals based on physical appearance. Such stereotypes may affect how individuals act toward members of particular races. Kivel, Johnson, and Scraton (2009) believed that categories such as race could create–or restrict–the opportunities of individuals.

Attitudes toward racial categorization are often expressed in hip-hop music. Often, hip-hop artists use the category of race to differentiate life experiences, attitudes,

and perspectives. It is through this category that artists reveal the differences between the majority and those who experience life from the margins. Research on hip-hop has been dedicated to understanding the combination of race and gender as forms of categorization for individuals. Hip-hop creates a space that allows the emergence of a critical discourse on the experience of Black women. It also creates a space to articulate feminist politics and to challenge popular representations of women of color (Clay 2008). Many Black women use the music of hip-hop as a tool for empowerment and to understand the current situation of women of color. Phillips, Reddic-Morgan, and Stephens (2005) add that through hip-hop, women of color, particularly African American women, are able to translate feminist ideas from the larger culture into street-level contexts to share amongst fellow individuals who are marginalized. Furthermore, they are able to add their own personal and political struggles and ideas, which can inform and challenge mainstream feminists.

It is worth noting the topic of gender and how some black feminist listeners may observe hip-hop music in a negative way. Oftentimes, gender is overlooked when regarding race. Individuals may categorize others by race and assume that the experience of individuals in particular racial categories may be the same without regarding any differences that may be experienced due to the intersection of race and gender. In a study exploring the ways in which Black Muslim women of the hip-hop generation use rap music to negotiate their faith and culture, McMurray (2008) found that particular tools are used to misrepresent and therefore marginalize their actual experiences. One of these tools is the systemic hyper-sexualization and marginalization of Black women in the hip-

hop music industry, which is often mistaken as a precise reflection of hip-hop culture (McMurray 2008). Though some hip-hop does not fully represent the experience of all African American women, the music certainly delivers an alternative view toward women that conventional society would not normally be exposed to.

Individuals may listen to hip-hop and find that many artists find the main reason behind differences in life experiences amongst individuals comes from being racially categorized. Also, observing hip-hop music can bring a deeper understanding of the intersection of race and gender in life experiences. Though much research has been dedicated to understanding race as a form of identity for groups of individuals, it is yet to be determined whether a connection between listening to hip-hop and finding race to be a convenient way to categorize individuals exists.

Linking the Acknowledgement of Race with Hip-Hop Music

Previous research has shown that individuals frequently acknowledge others based on their race. Harper (2009) believes that practicing racial consciousness and acknowledgment could offer promising rewards for society. According to Warmington (2009), acknowledging the race of individuals can contribute to alleviating struggles for social justice. Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009) add that by acknowledging race, policymakers and public sectors can gain a better understanding of structural obstacles that create racial inequalities. One way to address such inequalities would be to address the subjective and negative perceptions tied to certain racialized identities (Jain 2010). Such acknowledgement of race can be found in the lyrics of much hip-hop music.

It is almost a requirement to have pride and a want to preserve one's cultural heritage in the realm of hip-hop. This pride can be connected to the roots of hip-hop as it is an art form created as a means to acknowledge the value of African-Americans during a time of racial and economic turmoil. According to Alridge (2005), hip-hop music has many connections to the Civil Rights Movement. Both promoted Blacks to have self-determination, a liberatory education, and economic solidarity. Hip-hop serves as White America's introduction to minority society, exposing traditional America to the living conditions in the inner-city. Individuals who may not know about the experiences of racial minorities or individuals in the inner-city can use hip-hop as a form of exposure and education. Osumare (2001) adds that much of hip-hop acknowledges the struggle of Black and Latino males in ghettos, as well as the increasing violent gang activity that may take place in those areas.

Hip-hop has allowed racially marginalized individuals to realize that they share experiences with each other. Furthermore, hip-hop in America has allowed racial minorities to vocally acknowledge their self-worth and distinct identity in a society that promotes conformity to whiteness. Though much research has been dedicated to understanding race as a form of identity, it is yet to be determined whether a connection between listening to hip-hop and consciously acknowledging another individual's race exists.

Linking Racial Diversity and Focusing on Race as a Main Component of Association with Hip-Hop Music

Much research has been dedicated to understanding attitudes toward racial diversity. Mazzuca (2004) found that Whites (82%), Hispanics (80%), and Blacks (88%) in America are likely to report acceptance toward racial diversity and have friendships with individuals who are not of the same racial background. Cowan (2005) revealed that when individuals and groups were observed across ethnic groups and across college campuses, there were as many intraracial groups as there were interracial groups. According to Case (2007), students taking courses that deal with diversity can become more aware of racialized experiences, the institutional and prevalent nature of racism, and can more clearly recognize the extent of White privilege. Kernahan and Davis (2007) add that such courses may drive students to take proper action in alleviating the problems of racism.

Hip-hop has grown to be one of the most diverse cultures including individuals from all throughout the world in its community. If traveling, one cannot choose an international vacation spot or journey to a city on business without finding hip-hop culture, usually containing the sounds and movements of the American originators spiced with local flavor (Osumare 2001). According to Dennis (2006), hip-hop artists in Colombia strategically combine US hip-hop artifacts and influences with local ones to celebrate their cultures and even accentuate *blackness*. This may serve as evidence that US racial categories are being distributed by means of hip-hop music. Hip-hop has even provided a voice for frustrated individuals in communist China. Chinese hip-hop artists

like Pu Tao have used the medium to express anti-Japanese sentiments in reaction to the increasing public denials from politicians in regards to the Japanese militaristic legacy (Osumare 2001).

The hip-hop community may create networks and bonds between individuals from different backgrounds leading to a diverse group of friends. Groups like Ozomatli, The Visionaries, and Typical Cats are prime examples of individuals from different racial backgrounds forming with the central focus of creating hip-hop music to describe racially marginalized experiences. Also, since much of the messages in hip-hop focus on the experience of individuals marginalized because of race, individuals who consume the music may have a preference to associate with individuals who share the same consciousness regarding race. Since color-blind ideology would disregard *unique* experiences based on race, it would stand in opposition to these racial attitudes. Though much research has been dedicated to understanding race and diversity in the realm of hip-hop, it is yet to be determined whether a connection between listening to hip-hop and considering oneself to have a racially diverse group of friends or choosing race to play a major role with whom one associates with exists.

Linking the Concept of Race as Nonexistent with Hip-Hop Music

Previous research has been dedicated to understanding the idea that the inequalities and discrimination embedded in race do not exist. In my research, I refer to this idea as having a color-blind ideology. Included in a color-blind ideology are the concept of whiteness and its assumption of normativity (Guthman 2008). According to Quiroz (2007), the fact that the majority of intercountry adopters tend to be white

suggests normativity to a White culture justified by the claim of being color-blind. Reason and Evans (2007) believe that recognizing whiteness as a social identity is particularly difficult for some Whites individuals who have been taught to believe that ethnic and racial identity are attributed only to individuals of color and to ignore the role that ethnicity and race play in their own experience of life. According to Atwater (2008), many individuals often unconsciously hold racial biases that can affect their expectations of others. In order to stimulate true equality, then, the situation of all groups must be acknowledged and addressed (Tarca 2005).

Previous literature has also focused on the use of color-blind ideology to appropriate the culture of hip-hop. According to Alridge (2005), color-blind ideology provides White audience members in hip-hop with the discursive resources to justify their presence in the scene. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity for whites to use their racial power–be it intentional or not–to appropriate the culture of hip-hop, removing the racially conscious messages out of the music and replacing them with color-blind ones. In a study to understand the representational tactics of White rapper, Eminem, Dawkins (2010) found that Eminem creates a marginalized space for himself by acknowledging his white race in a genre of music that has been categorized as Black. Doing so allows him to relate with the Black and other minority members of his audience by revealing an experience of racial marginalization from the majority of Black musicians in hip-hop. Keller (2009) adds that Eminem uses the tactic of portraying himself as the underdog who must overcome doubt and discrimination in a power structure that is typically the target of discrimination rather than the perpetrator.

Individuals who do not listen to hip-hop may keep themselves from listening to music that would expose them to messages highlighting racialized experiences. It is worth noting findings from Osumare (2001) regarding a version of hip-hop, or mainstream rap, often heard on the radio or in nightclubs, that deals less with delivering messages of a racially marginalized experience, and focuses more on partying, drugs, and sexual promiscuity. Many longtime listeners of hip-hop often argue that such music does not capture the traditional essence of the music and should be regarded as pop-music rather than hip-hop. Though some research has been dedicated to understanding the role in which white audiences in the realm of hip-hop *use* a color-blind ideology, it is yet to be determined whether listening to hip-hop has an actual effect on *having* a color-blind ideology.

Hip-Hop Genres

This study observes hip-hop as a category of music that includes genres that differ by form and content and their possible relationship to various attitudes of race. Because each genre conveys different messages in its lyrics, it is important to analyze the specificity of hip-hop music. The literature discusses four major genres that may be categorized as: (1) gangsta; (2) misogynistic; (3) socially and politically conscious (SPC); and (4) mainstream.

Gangsta Rap. The first genre can be labeled *gangsta*. Forman (2000) defines gangsta rap as music that promotes "capitalistic values such as rugged individualism, rampant materialism, strength through physical force, and male domination" (p. 188). In other words, gangsta rap promotes ideas of dominating over others, accumulating as

many material goods (legally or illegally) as possible, and using physical violence to gain respect from others. Ex-president of the National Political Congress of Black Women, C. Delores Tucker believes that gangsta rap bred self-destruction among listeners, particularly the youth (Forman 2000).

According to Herd (2009), gangsta rap provides the outsider (i.e., mainstream society) with a glimpse of the gangster identity- an identity bound only by attitude, lifestyle, and ultimately music choice. But the lyrics often heard in gangsta rap clearly draw the spatial boundaries that contain the gangsta rapper. In other words, much of gangsta rap focuses on the experiences of minorities in the urban environment while excluding individuals in the surrounding suburbs and denying them as sharers of those experiences. Songs like, "Tales from the Darkside" by gangsta rapper Ice Cube explicitly exclude the White middle-class youth (the majority of hip-hop's commercial market) from the African-American identity of the gangsta. Previous studies, however, have not determined whether or not the messages promoted in gangsta rap have an influence on the individual's view of race.

Misogynistic Rap. The second genre can be labeled *misogynistic*. Adams and Douglas (2006) define misogyny as the disdain or hatred for women. It is an ideology that reduces women to objects for men's use, abuse, or ownership. Furthermore, they theorize that one of the following six beliefs is usually included in misogynistic rap: (1) references of women as discardable and usable beings; (2) references of men having a higher status than women; (3) characterization of women as *users* of men; (4) references of women as causes of *trouble* for men; (5) statements involving violent actions toward

women, specifically in relation to sex; and (6) derogatory statements about women in relation to sex (Adams and Douglas 2006). Within rap music, misogyny entails the glamorizing, promotion, humorizing, justifying, or normalizing of oppressive concepts towards women (Tyree 2009).

According to Tyree (2009), Black male rappers often create a space in rap music where they do not give their female peers a safe space that includes expressions of love. Instead, Black male rappers use language that reinforces negative Black female stereotypes and continues to use the misogynistic patterns that have historically been found in rap. Ideas and experiences of love are absent or overshadowed and replaced with language of dislike, hurt, and hate (Tyree 2009). Previous studies, however, have not determined whether or not the messages promoted in misogynistic rap have an influence on the individual's view of race.

Socially and Politically Conscious Rap. The third genre can be labeled *socially and politically conscious (SPC)*. Unlike misogynistic and gangsta rap, SPC rap conveys messages that are intended to raise social and political issues to the consciousness, particularly, of individuals who are racially marginalized, yet still accessible to the greater public. According to Alridge (2005), hip-hop originated partly as a direct response to the civil rights generation's perceived rejection of the needs and values of the urban youth. Socially and politically conscious rappers provide their listeners with an alternative look at issues ranging from racial to economic to social. Messages of defiance and rejection of entrenched US racism can be found in the lyrics of much of SPC rap.

Previous research, however, has not determined whether or not the messages promoted in SPC rap have an influence on the individual's view of race.

Mainstream Hip-Hop. The last genre can be labeled *mainstream*. This type of genre can be defined as party music that is either played on commercial urban radio stations or throughout nightclubs. Music of this genre contains lyrics regarding financial accumulation, excessive sexual intercourse, recreational drug use, alcohol use, trendy dance moves, and hip-hop jargon. It is viewed as the most popular and most accepted form of hip-hop. Because it focuses less on raising a social consciousness or exposing individuals to the struggles of inner-city living, mainstream rap can also be seen as a genre outside of hip-hop. In other words, mainstream may be performed in hip-hop style, but it lacks the depth and lyrical content that is often connected with hip-hop. Mainstream rap has shaped the attitude and identity of its listeners- particularly the youth. Herd (2005) argues that the norms, behaviors, and beliefs of young people are significantly impacted by mainstream media. Similarly, Jaret and Boles (1992) argue that particular elements of popular culture mixed with song lyrics both reinforce beliefs, attitudes, and values and help to guide and form them. For example, Jaret et al. (1992) suggest that if song lyrics present alcohol consumption as an acceptable method of solving personal issues, listeners are more likely to use alcohol in a crisis than if they had not been exposed to repeated suggestions that alcohol helps in solving troubling situations. Previous studies, however, have not determined whether or not the messages promoted in mainstream rap have an influence on the individual's view of race.

Summary

This literature review highlights how sociologists have empirically studied and conceptualized various social aspects of hip-hop music and everyday notions of race. However, it identifies serious gaps related to the racial attitudes of hip-hop music listeners and non-listeners. Consequently, this study aims to compare hip-hop music listeners and non-listeners and examine the effect of listening to hip-hop genres on everyday notions of race.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature, it is expected that individuals who listen to hip-hop are more likely than individuals who do not listen to hip-hop to acknowledge the race of an individual upon first sight; consider the race to be a convenient way to categorize individuals; believe race plays a major role with whom they choose to associate with; and consider themselves to have a diverse group of friends. Conversely, it is expected that individuals who do not listen to hip-hop are more likely to believe that race no longer has social consequences. Stated simply, individuals who listen to hip-hop are more likely than individuals who do not listen to hip-hop to have a negative attitude toward color-blind ideology.

It may be expected that no or a relatively weak relationship exists between frequently listening to hip-hop and having a particular view of race. However, prior studies may lead to the assumption that the opposite is more likely. Thus, in this study, six hypotheses relating the individual's frequency of listening to hip-hop music with particular notions of race will be tested.

Previous research shows that hip-hop music can be used to express differences of life experiences based on race. Gangsta rap, for example, reveals the different hardships that African-Americans in the inner city experience as opposed to the conventional, White, middle class individuals in suburbia. Instead of living drug-free, pursuing an education, and getting a career, gangsta rap focuses on drug abuse and using physical force as a means to gain. In other words, gangsta rap reveals an alternative approach that racial minorities might use for life. Similarly, many comedians may use racial jokes to highlight approaches toward life that differ between races in an entertaining way. By frequently listening to gangsta rap, individuals may be more inclined to find racial humor to be entertaining. Thus, it is expected that:

H1: Individuals who frequently listen to gangsta rap are likely to find racial humor to be entertaining, controlling for race, sex, and income.

Research by Vora and England (2004) revealed that race is one of the most frequent and first categories that individuals are often placed in. Hip-hop music delivers the message that individuals may have different life experiences due to their racial categorization (Clay 2008; Phillips et al 2005; McMurray 2008). By listening to hip-hop, individuals may find race to be a category that conveniently differentiates people's life experiences. In other words, race gives individuals a method to assume an understanding of the complexities that make up the identity of another individual simply based on their appearance. Thus, it is expected that:

H2A: Individuals who frequently listen to socio-political conscious (SPC) hip-hop are likely to consider race a convenient way to categorize people, controlling for race, sex, and income.

Moreover, differences in life experiences can be further observed when intersecting the category of race with the category of gender. Particularly in misogynistic rap, messages of women as discardable beings, subordinate to men, trouble for men, and users of men are present. Though many feminists argue that misogynistic rap does not provide a full representation of women (particularly African-American women), the messages certainly provide an alternative message that would not usually be delivered to mainstream society if not for hip-hop. By listening to misogynistic rap, individuals may agree with the view that race is a convenient way to categorize others. Thus, it is expected that:

H2B: Individuals who frequently listen to misogynistic rap are more likely to believe that race is a convenient way to categorize people, controlling for race, sex, and income.

Hip-hop was created as a response to the harsh economic conditions experienced mostly by racially marginalized individuals (e.g., Blacks, Puerto Ricans) in New York City during the mid to late 1970s. Hip-hop music has been used to reveal the experiences of these individuals, thus allowing the masses to access a view of race from the margins. According to Aldrige (2005), the messages promoted in socio-political conscious (SPC) hip-hop share similarities with the messages promoted in the Civil Rights Movement. Particularly both share messages that acknowledge the value of racial minorities (i.e.,

African-Americans). By listening to hip-hop, individuals may have a more heightened awareness of race. Thus, it is expected that:

> **H3:** Individuals who listen to SPC hip-hop are likely to acknowledge an individual's race when they first see him/her, controlling for race, sex, and income.

By listening to SPC hip-hop, individuals may be more conscious of the different experiences that individuals go through based on their race. Thus, they may be more inclined to acknowledge the race of the individual. Furthermore, the messages may produce a consciousness of selective association based on race. In other words, individuals who frequently listen to SPC may choose to associate more with individuals who understand and share similar experiences. This experience can be rooted in being a racially marginalized individual. Thus, it is also expected that:

> **H4:** Individuals who frequently listen to SPC hip-hop are likely to believe they have a racially diverse group of friends, controlling for race, sex, and income.

Finally, though some genres of hip-hop often promote messages of racial consciousness, White participants often appropriate the music by replacing such messages with color-blind ones (Aldrige 2005). Furthermore, the messages often heard in mainstream (sex, alcohol, and conspicuous consumption) can often overlook the effects of race on the individual's experience of life. It is unknown, however, whether or not listening to mainstream leads to the belief in a color-blind ideology. Thus, it is expected that:

H5: Individuals who frequently listen to SPC hip-hop are likely to believe that race plays a major role with whom they choose to associate, controlling for race, sex, and income.

Hip-hop has become an international phenomenon that finds participation from individuals of various backgrounds (Tickner 2008; Dennis 2006; Khan 2007; Condry 2007; Osumare 2001; and Perry 2008). SPC hip-hop may reveal that the experience of social struggle based on racial marginalization is a universal idea and may serve to unite individuals who share similar struggles. Individuals who listen to SPC hip-hop may choose to associate with individuals outside of their race using their racial marginalization as a foundation of similarity. By listening to hip-hop, individuals may allow themselves more exposure to a diverse group of individuals. Thus, it was hypothesized that:

H6*:* Individuals who frequently listen to SPC hip-hop are less likely to believe that race does not exist, controlling for race, sex, and income.

Data and Method

This study is based on a survey of a non-probability convenience sample of students enrolled in an Introduction to Sociology class during the 2009 Spring semester in an urban California college. The respondents completed a closed-ended questionnaire approved by the San José State University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The respondents completed a survey questionnaire that included a total of 39 closed-ended items. The questionnaire was composed in cooperation with two fellow colleagues who used particular items for respective research. Of the 39 closed-ended

items, twenty-two were used in this thesis. The survey included demographic questions (e.g., race, sex, and income), questions regarding the level to which the individual listened to hip-hop music, questions regarding the messages individuals heard when listening to hip-hop music, and questions regarding notions about race (see Appendix A).

Definition of the Dependent Variables

This study examines the effects of listening to hip-hop genres on racial attitudes. In particular, these everyday attitudes and notions on race include (1) "I find racial humor to be entertaining," (2) "Race is a convenient way to categorize people," (3) "I acknowledge race when I first see an individual," (4) "Race plays a major role with whom I choose to associate with," (5) "I consider myself to have a racially diverse group of friends," and (6) "Race does not exist." Each of these dependent variables relates to its respective research hypothesis discussed earlier.

"I find racial humor to be entertaining." The level to which an individual viewed racial humor to be entertaining was measured. It is unknown whether listening to hip-hop music, a form of entertainment that often uses the topic of race as a focal point, may lead to such an understanding of race. Thus, participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following question: "I find racial humor to be entertaining." The following scale was given to the respondents for answering options: *disagree* (1), *somewhat disagree* (2), *neutral* (3), *somewhat agree* (4), and *agree* (5). By somewhat agreeing or agreeing with this statement the respondent recognizes the entertainment value of humor that highlights differences between individuals based on race. By somewhat disagreeing or disagreeing with this statement the respondent chooses not to

see any differences between individuals based on race, thus does not find racial humor to be entertaining.

"Race is a convenient way to categorize people." The level to which an individual viewed race to be a convenient way to categorize people was measured. It is unknown whether listening to hip-hop music has an effect on the individual's choice to categorize others by race. Thus, participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following question: "Race is a convenient way to categorize people." The following scale was given to the respondents for answering options: *disagree* (1), *somewhat disagree* (2), *neutral* (3), *somewhat agree* (4), and *agree* (5). By somewhat agreeing or agreeing with this statement, the respondent chooses to believe that there is no problem with placing individuals into the category of race. By somewhat disagreeing or disagreeing with this statement the respondent chooses to believe that a more complex understanding of individuals is required and categorizing others by race would be missing many factors that go into identifying an individual.

"I acknowledge race when I first see an individual." The level to which an individual acknowledged another individual's race upon first sight was measured. It is unknown whether or not listening to hip-hop music leads to having an awareness of race. The participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following question: "I acknowledge race when I first see an individual." The following scale was gien to the respondents for answering options: *disagree* (1), *somewhat disagree* (2), *neutral* (3), *somewhat agree* (4), and *agree* (5). By somewhat agreeing or agreeing with this statement the respondent chooses to believe that s/he acknowledges race and the unique

experiences behind racial identities. By somewhat disagreeing or disagreeing with this statement the respondent chooses to believe that s/he does not acknowledge the unique experiences behind racial identities and that experiences may be unique, but not because of race.

"Race plays a major role with whom I choose to associate with." The level to which an individual believed that race played a major role with whom they chose to associate with was measured. Participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following question: "Race plays a major role with whom I choose to associate with." The following scale was given to the respondents for answering options: *disagree* (1), *somewhat disagree* (2), *neutral* (3), *somewhat agree* (4), and *agree* (5). By somewhat agreeing or agreeing with this statement the respondent recognizes that s/he consciously chooses to associate with individuals based on their race. By somewhat disagreeing or disagreeing with this statement the respondent chooses to believe that s/he does not use race as a criteria for whom s/he chooses to associate with.

"I consider myself to have a racially diverse group of friends." The level to which an individual believed that s/he had a racially diverse group of friends was measured. It is unknown whether listening to hip-hop leads to the creation of diverse friendships amongst individuals. Thus, participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following question: "I consider myself to have a racially diverse group of friends." The following scale was given to the respondents for answering options: *disagree* (1), *somewhat disagree* (2), *neutral* (3), *somewhat agree* (4), and *agree* (5). By somewhat agreeing or agreeing with this statement, the respondent is conscious of the racially

diverse friendships that s/he may have with other individuals. In other words, their racial differences are acknowledged in their friendship. By somewhat disagreeing or disagreeing with this statement, the respondent recognizes that s/he has friendships with individuals who are mostly from his/her own racial background.

"Race does not exist." The level to which an individual believed that race does not exist was measured. It is unknown whether or not listening to hip-hop leads to the belief in a colorblind ideology. Thus, participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following question: "Race does not exist." The following scale was given to the respondents for answering options: *disagree* (1), *somewhat agree* (2), *neutral* (3), *somewhat agree* (4), and *agree* (5). By somewhat agreeing or agreeing with this statement, the respondent believes that race does not exist and that no differences between individuals occur based on the idea of race. By somewhat disagreeing or disagreeing with this statement, the respondent believes that race does indeed exist and life experiences do differ based on race.

Definition of the Key Independent Variable

This study includes in its analysis four variables related to the four major types of hip-hop genres: (1) gangsta rap, (2) misogynistic rap, (3) socially-politically conscious rap, and (4) mainstream rap.

The level to which an individual listened to gangsta rap was measured. Conceptually this was defined as the frequency that the individual listened to gangsta rap. To be consistent with previous studies (Forman 1999), this variable was measured by asking the following questions: "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that promote

using physical force in order to gain respect from others?" "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that promote drug use?" The following scale was given to the respondents for answering options: *Never (1), Not very often (2), Somewhat often (3), Very often (4),* and *All the time (5).*

The level to which an individual listened to misogynistic rap was measured. Conceptually this was defined as the frequency that the individual listened to misogynistic rap. To be consistent with previous studies (Adams and Douglas 2006; Tyree 2009), this variable was measured by asking the following questions: "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that promote women as being usable and discardable beings?" "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that promote derogatory statements against women?" "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that contain references of women causing "trouble" for men?" "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that contain references of characterizing women as "users" of men?" The following scale was given to the respondents for answering options: *Never (1), Not very often (2), Somewhat often (3), Very often (4),* and *All the time (5).*

The level to which an individual listened to socially-politically conscious rap was measured. Conceptually this was defined as the frequency that the individual listened to SPC rap. To be consistent with previous studies (Alridge 2005), this variable was measured by asking the following questions: "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that contain references on the importance of participating in social/community issues?" "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that contain references on the importance of being engaged in politics?" The following scale was given to the respondents for

answering options: *Never (1), Not very often (2), Somewhat often (3), Very often (4),* and *All the time (5).*

The level to which an individual listened to mainstream rap was measured. Conceptually, this was defined as the frequency that the individual listened to mainstream rap. To be consistent with previous studies (Herd 2005; Jaret and Boles 1992), this variable was measured by asking the following questions: "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that promote alcohol consumption?" "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that promote partying?" "How often do you hear hip-hop/rap songs that promote making money?" The following scale was given to the respondents for answering options: *Never (1), Not very often (2), Somewhat often (3), Very often (4),* and *All the time (5).*

Control Variables

The individual's sex was requested by asking the question: "What is your sex?" The respondents were given the options of female (coded as 2) or male (coded as 1). Also requested was the individual's race by asking the question: "What is your race?" The respondents were given the options of *White, Black* or *Other*. The final control variable was the individual's level of income, which was requested by asking the question: "What was your annual income last year?" The respondents were given the options of *0-$9,999*; *$10,000-$19,999; $20,000-$29,999; $30,000-$39,999; $40,000-$49,999;* and *$50,000 +*.

The values for the control variables were transformed. The original values for variable sex were 1 for *male* and 2 for *female*. *Female* was recoded as 0 and serves as the

reference category in the analysis. The values for variable Black were recoded as 1 for *Black*, 0 for *White,* and 0 for *Other*. The values for variable Other were recoded as 1 for *Other*, 0 for *White,* and 0 for *Black*. White serves as the reference category for the Race variable. Finally, the values for annual income were recoded as follows: 1 for *$0-$9,999* and 0 for the rest of the values. Income greater than $9,999 serves as the reference category for the Income variable.

Participants

One hundred seventy-two respondents completed the questionnaire survey. Seven were not included in the descriptive and regression analyses due to missing information. The present study focused on the responses of the remaining 165 respondents. Table 1 provides a statistical profile of the respondents. The majority in the sample racially identified as Other (n = 102; 59.3%), while the remainder identified as White (n = 50; 29.1%) and Black (n = 20; 11.6%). There were more female participants (n = 106; 61.6%) than male (n = 66; 38.4%). And respondents selected the $0-$9,999 annual income category most frequently.

Multiple Regression Analysis

In this study, I used a multiple linear regression analysis to examine the effect of the amount of listening to select hip-hop genres on six everyday racial attitudes, controlling for gender, race, and income. Multiple regression analysis allows a convenient interpretation of the results by assuming that the six dependent variables (related to everyday racial attitudes) are measured on an interval scale, even though they were collected based on Likert-scales.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics (N = 165)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Scale for individuals who acknowledge race when they first see an individual (1-5)	1.32	0.471
Scale for individuals who believe race is a convenient way to categorize people (1-5)	2.61	1.213
Scale for individuals who consider themselves to have a racially diverse group of friends (1-5)	4.11	1.188
Scale for individuals who believe race plays a major role in whom they choose to associate with (1-5)	1.63	1.092
Scale for individuals who find racial humor to be entertaining (1-5)	3.04	1.357
Scale for individuals who believe that race does not exist (1-5)	2.03	1.358
Listener of Mainstream Hip-Hop scale (1-5)	2.12	0.633
Listener of Gangsta Hip-Hop scale (1-5)	9.82	0.994
Listener of Misogynistic Hip-Hop scale (1-5)	1.73	0.963
Listener of Socio-Political Hip-Hop scale (1-5)	1.97	1.026
Percent Male	37.50%	0.485
Percent White	29.76%	0.459
Percent Black	10.12%	0.302
Percent Other	60.12%	0.491
Annual income last year: $0-$9,999	67.27%	0.491

Analysis

Overall, this study revealed that individuals, who frequently listen to hip-hop, specifically misogynistic rap, were less likely to believe that race is a convenient way to categorize people. This finding counters the argument that listening to misogynistic rap gives individuals a way to exclude particular views of women among the attitudes of individuals from particular racial categories. Thus, categorizing individuals by race and assumed characteristics of particular races may not be as simple or convenient as thought. Perhaps by intersecting race and gender, a more suitable way to categorize individuals can be developed. The lack of statistically significant results showed the difficulty in asserting a clear relationship between attitudes related to racialized and color-blind ideas and the practice of listening to different genres of hip-hop music.

Tables 2 through 6 present the results of multiple linear regressions for each of the dependent variables in relation to the independent variables. In each table, three models were included. In the first model, the dependent variable were regressed with the control variables: race, sex, and income. The second model then introduced the variable of mainstream rap, which stood as the comparative variable to the different genres of hip-hop. The third model, then, introduced the particular genre of hip-hop that was tested for each specific dependent variable.

Table 2 presents the results of a linear regression on the notion that race is a convenient way to categorize individuals. According to these results, hypotheses 2A and 2B, which respectively state that individuals who frequently listen to SPC hip-hop or frequently listen to misogynistic rap are more likely to believe that race is a convenient

way to categorize individuals, were rejected. Model 3 of this table, however, shows that for the *listener of misogynistic rap scale* (p-value < 0.01), there is a statistically significant decrease of 0.302 on the scale of the belief that race is a convenient way to categorize individuals, controlling for race, sex, and income. These results reveal that the more a person listens to misogynistic rap, the less likely that person will believe that race is a convenient way to categorize individuals, thus revealing a negative relationship. The R-squared value in Model 3 was 0.075. In other words, 7.5% of the variation was explained by including these genres of hip-hop. Though this table shows that hypotheses 2A and 2B were rejected, it also reveals the only statistically significant result for a music genre in this study.

This significance may be due to a number of reasons. Perhaps when individuals listen to misogynistic rap, they realize that categorizations such as race may oversimplify identity. In other words, the messages in misogynistic rap may lead an individual to believe that a more complex understanding of race, gender, and perhaps even class would be more suitable in order to make sense of what that individual heard. Another reason may be the ambiguousness of the statement used in the survey for this variable. *I find race to be a convenient way to categorize people* is a very general and broad statement that leaves much subjectivity for the respondent. Perhaps a more directed statement would have provided different results.

TABLE 2

Regression of Race as a Convenient Way to Categorize Individuals on Listener of SPC Hip-Hop Scale and Control Variables or Listener of Misogynistic Rap Scale and Control Variables

Variables	Model #1		Model #2		Model #3	
Intercept	2.678 **	(0.222)	3.233 **	(0.517)	3.167 **	(0.509)
Male	0.063	(0.198)	0.119	(0.224)	0.186	(0.221)
Black	-0.302	(0.341)	-0.297	(0.373)	-0.141	(0.373)
Other	0.087	(0.211)	0.058	(0.231)	0.077	(0.227)
Income: $0-$9,999	-0.191	(0.204)	-0.416	(0.233)	-0.351	(0.231)
Listener of Mainstream Rap Scale			-0.164	(0.197)	0.087	(0.221)
Listener of SPC Hip-Hop					-0.143	(0.101)
Listener of Misogynistic Rap Scale					-0.302 **	(0.126)
N	165		165		165	
R Squared	0.014		0.035		0.075	

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

Table 3 presents the results of a linear regression on the notion that racial humor is entertaining. According to these results, the hypothesis that individuals who frequently listen to gangsta rap are more likely to find racial humor to be entertaining was rejected. In all three models, however, being *male* (p-value < 0.01) revealed significant results. Model 1 of this table shows that for males, there is a statistically significant increase of 1.029 on the scale of the belief that racial humor is entertaining, controlling for race, sex, and income. Model 2 shows a statistically significant increase of 1.026, and Model 3 shows a statistically significant increase of 0.966. These results reveal that compared to females, males are more likely to believe that racial humor is entertaining, thus indicating a positive relationship.

Table 3 also reveals that in all three models, having an income between $0 and $9,999 (p-value < 0.05) had significant results. Model 1 of this table shows that for income $0-$9,999, there is a statistically significant increase of 0.483 on the scale of the belief that racial humor is entertaining, controlling for race, sex, and income. Model 2 shows a statistically significant increase of 0.475, and Model 3 shows a statistically significant increase of 0.473. These results reveal that compared to individuals whose income is not between $0 and $9,999, individuals whose income *is* between $0 and $9,999 are more likely to believe that racial humor is entertaining, thus indicating a positive relationship. Ultimately, however, this table shows that hypothesis one was rejected.

TABLE 3

Regression of Racial Humor as Entertaining on Listener of

Gangsta Rap Scale and Control Variables

Variables	Model #1		Model #2		Model #3	
Intercept	2.180 **	(0.227)	1.364 **	(0.528)	1.564 **	(0.566)
Male	1.029 **	(0.202)	1.026 **	(0.229)	0.966 **	(0.237)
Black	-0.125	(0.349)	-0.212	(0.382)	-0.242	(0.383)
Other	0.266	(0.216)	0.276	(0.237)	0.294	(0.237)
Income: $0-$9,999	0.483 *	(0.208)	0.475 *	(0.239)	0.473 *	(0.239)
Listener of Mainstream Rap Scale			0.358	(0.202)	0.121	(0.313)
Listener of Gangsta Rap Scale					0.196	(0.196)
N	165		165		165	
R Squared	0.189		0.191		0.197	

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

TABLE 4

Regression of Acknowledging the Race of an Individual on Listener of SPC hip-hop Scale and Control Variables

Variables	Model #1		Model #2		Model #3	
Intercept	1.351 **	(0.088)	1.702 **	(0.198)	1.700 **	(0.198)
Male	0.020	(0.078)	-0.003	(0.086)	0.007	(0.087)
Black	0.010	(0.135)	-0.010	(0.143)	0.008	(0.145)
Other	-0.011	(0.083)	-0.020	(0.089)	-0.014	(0.089)
Income: $0-$9,999	-0.029	(0.080)	-0.019	(0.089)	-0.022	(0.090)
Listener of Mainstream Rap Scale			-0.145 *	(0.076)	-0.133	(0.077)
Listener of SPC hip-hop Scale					-0.034	(0.044)
N	165		165		165	
R Squared	0.001		0.028		0.032	

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

Table 4 presents the results of a linear regression on the notion that the individual acknowledges another individual's race upon first sight. According to these results, the hypothesis that individuals who listen to SPC hip-hop are likely to acknowledge another individual's race when they first see him/her was rejected. Model 2 of this table shows that for the *listener of mainstream rap scale* (p-value < 0.05), there is a statistically significant decrease of 0.359 on the scale of acknowledging another individual's race upon first sight, controlling for race, sex, and income. These results reveal that the more a person listens to mainstream rap, the less likely that person would be to acknowledge the race of an individual when he/she first sees him/her, thus indicating a negative relationship. This result, however, loses its significance when the genre of frequently listening to SPC hip-hop is introduced. This table shows that hypothesis three was rejected.

Table 5 presents the results of a linear regression on the notion that race plays a major role in whom a person chooses to associate with. According to these results, the hypothesis that individuals who listen to SPC hip-hop are likely to believe race to play a major role with whom they choose to associate was rejected. Models 2 and 3 show that *frequently listening mainstream rap* (p-value < 0.05) has a significant relationship. Model 2 of this table shows that for the *listener of mainstream rap scale*, there is a statistically significant decrease of 0.353 on the scale of the belief that race plays a major role in whom a person chooses to associate with, controlling for race, sex, and income. Model 3 of this table shows a statistically significant decrease of 0.409. These results reveal that the more an individual listens to mainstream rap, the less likely that individual

will choose race to play a major role with whom s/he chooses to associate, thus indicating a negative relationship. This table shows that hypothesis five was rejected.

TABLE 5

Regression of Race Playing a Major Role in Whom a Person Chooses to Associate With on Listener of SPC hip-hop Scale and Control Variables

Variables	Model #1		Model #2		Model #3	
Intercept	1.451	** (0.198)	2.259	** (0.449)	2.267	** (0.446)
Male	0.267	(0.176)	0.178	(0.194)	0.134	(0.195)
Black	0.115	(0.304)	0.219	(0.324)	0.137	(0.327)
Other	0.305	(0.188)	0.284	(0.201)	0.252	(0.201)
Income: $0-$9,999	-0.176	(0.182)	-0.101	(0.203)	-0.085	(0.202)
Listener of Mainstream Rap Scale			-0.353	* (0.172)	-0.409	* (0.174)
Listener of SPC hip-hop Scale					0.157	(0.137)
N	165		165		165	
R Squared	0.031		0.053		0.070	

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

Table 6 presents the results of a linear regression on the notion that race does not exist. According to these results, the hypothesis that individuals who listen to SPC hip-hop are less likely to believe that race does not exist was rejected. All three models show significant results for individuals whose race was Black or other. Model 1 of this table shows that for *Black* (p-value < 0.05), there is a statistically significant decrease of 0.874 on the scale of the belief that race does not exist, controlling for race, sex, and income. Model 2 of this table shows that for *Black* (p-value < 0.01) there is a statistically significant decrease of 1.069 on the scale of the belief that race does not exist. Model 3 shows a statistically significant decrease of 1.153. These results reveal that compared to Whites, individuals whose race is Black are less likely to believe that race does not exist, thus indicating a negative relationship. This table shows that hypothesis six was rejected.

Model 1 of this table shows that for *Other* (p-value < 0.05), there is a statistically significant decrease of 0.618 on the scale of the belief that race does not exist, controlling for race, sex, and income. Model 2 of this table shows that for *Other* (p-value < 0.01) there is a statistically significant decrease of 0.272 on the scale of the belief that race does not exist. Model 3 shows a statistically significant decrease of 0.695. These results reveal that compared to Whites, individuals whose race is other are less likely to believe that race does not exist, thus indicating a negative relationship.

TABLE 6

Regression of as Non-existent on Listener of SPC hip-hop Scale and Control Variables

Variables	Model #1		Model #2		Model #3	
Intercept	2.789 **	(0.244)	3.734 **	(0.554)	3.743 **	(0.552)
Male	-0.172	(0.217)	-0.172	(0.240)	-0.218	(0.241)
Black	-0.874 *	(0.374)	-1.069 **	(0.400)	-1.153 **	(0.404)
Other	-0.618 **	(0.232)	-0.272 **	(0.248)	-0.695 **	(0.248)
Income: $0-$9,999	-0.318	(0.224)	-0.272	(0.250)	-0.256	(0.250)
Frequent listener of Mainstream Rap			-0.417 *	(0.212)	-0.475 *	(0.216)
Frequent listener of SPC hip-hop					0.162	(0.123)
N	165		165		165	
R Squared	0.071		0.112		0.124	

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

Model 2 of this table shows that for the *listener of mainstream rap scale* (p-value < 0.05), there is a statistically significant decrease of 0.417 on the scale of the belief that race does not exist, controlling for race, sex, and income. Model 3 a statistically significant decrease of 0.475. These results reveal that the more an individual listens to mainstream rap, the less likely s/he is to believe that race does not exist, thus indicating a negative relationship.

Five out of the six hypotheses were accounted in the preceding tables. Since there were no significant results for the hypothesis that individuals who frequently listen to SPC hip-hop are likely to believe they have a racially diverse group of friends, controlling for race, sex, and income, no table was included. Stated explicitly, hypothesis four was rejected in this study.

Conclusion

This research was designed to examine the effect of frequently listening to select hip-hop genres on how individuals view race. To summarize the findings, individuals who frequently listen to hip-hop, specifically misogynistic rap, are less likely to believe that race is a convenient way to categorize people, controlling for race, sex, and income. It was thought that because misogynistic rap provides particular views of women, those views could be attributed to the individuals whose racial category is most associated with hip-hop (i.e., Blacks), thus supporting the notion that a higher frequency of listening to misogynistic rap would lead to the belief that race is a convenient way to categorize individuals. The results from this research, however, show that such an attribution does not exist. In fact, the opposite showed significant results. Therefore, this study

contributes to the existing scholarship by displaying that a critical exploration of hip-hop cannot only measure the usefulness of the music in theoretical and political production, but it can also help expand our understanding of how the position of racially marginalized women in America is interpreted (Peoples 2008).

The present findings, then, show how hip-hop music listeners, to some extent, take an active role in shaping their views of race. According to Cose (1997), many individuals believe that since overtly expressed racism is less visible, racism no longer exists thus placing us in a society that is racially color-blind. However, having such a view only serves as a way to overlook race as a possible source for problems that individuals may currently experience. My initial motivation in this study was to highlight the limitations of having a color-blind ideology by showing that hip-hop provides a perspective suggesting that race and racism still exist. Hip-hop artist Kanye West uses his music to address the issue of color-blind ideology by claiming that racism is still prevalent, however concealed. In his song *All Falls Down,* West recites, "Even if you're in a [Mercedes] Benz, you're still a nigger in a coup" (West 2004, track 4). West suggests that although African-Americans may have access to material goods that were at one point exclusive to Whites in America, the social fabrications that create racial discrimination continue to make themselves present in today's society. The critical view of Kanye West is not unfamiliar in the realm of hip-hop. Indeed, Alridge (2005) revealed the similarities existing between the messages in much of hip-hop music and the Civil Rights Movement. Included in both were messages that promoted Blacks to have self-determination, an education that focuses on mental liberation, and the pursuit for

economic solidarity. Racism can be labeled the common denominator that both hip-hop and the Civil Rights Movement had as a goal to overcome. The claim, then, of having a color-blind ideology is a denial of the existence of issues that are experienced because of race (e.g., racism).

This research does have several limitations that may be addressed in future research on this topic. Improvements can be made on the operationalization of the dependent and independent variables. For example, when constructing the variable for *mainstream rap*, respondents were asked how often they heard hip-hop/rap songs that promote alcohol consumption or making money. Such messages are also heard in other genres such as gangsta rap. Thus, the construction of the dependent and independent variables could be improved, as they may not have fully captured what was intended in this research.

Also, the analysis in this study is largely exploratory given the nature of the sample, the construction of the survey questionnaires, and the scaling of the dependent variables. Because of the Likert-scaling of the dependent variables, it might be better to conduct an ordered logit regression analysis. It might also be better to conduct interviews with individuals from various backgrounds as the concept of color-blind ideology may differ from person to person. Though in the greater structural sense, color-blind ideology may claim that discrimination and inequality are no longer components of race, the interpretations of this concept may differ between an individual who lives in the mid-west and an individual who lives in a diverse setting such as the San Francisco Bay Area. Including interviews may provide more insight in these different interpretations.

Furthermore, another limitation is that because hip-hop's audience is one of the most diverse in the world, the sample in this study can be improved. The fact that most of the individuals in this study were students enrolled in a Sociology class already suggests a particular frame of mind. Furthermore, assuming that these students were at least in their first year in college may skew the data, as many of them may have not been present to witness the transformation of the music. In other words, many of the respondents may have grown up in a time where hip-hop was already mainstream, and not witnessed its transformation from being a counterculture to apart of the mainstream culture. This may explain why some results turned out the way they did. For example, this may explain why there was a significantly negative result between individuals who listen to mainstream rap and thinking that race does not exist. Future research might explore a more diverse region that includes a greater range of age, race, and income. Finally, the construction of the dependent variables was based mostly on what was missing in the literature. For example, "acknowledgement of race" was a concept that was missing in previous research. Though research had found that individuals might acknowledge the race of others, the connection of acknowledging the unique experiences *because* of race may have been assumed in previous work. If color-blind ideology would argue that race is no longer the basis of discrimination and social inequalities, the acknowledgement of race would argue that racial discrimination and social inequalities cannot be separated from the concept of race. Creating dependent variables based on views of race that have previously been included in literature may improve the study.

This study does make a contribution to the field of sociology. By having a significant result, this study shows that hip-hop music does indeed have an effect on how individuals shape their idea of race. By considering the limitations of the study, future studies may provide more insight on the relationship that this study originally intended to understand.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Please respond as accurately as possible to the questions below. All respondents will be assured complete anonymity and confidentiality. This survey should only take approx. 10 minutes to complete and has been approved by the Institutional Review Board for distribution. Thank you for participating in this survey, your responses are very valuable to our research.

1. What is your sex? (Please circle one)
Male Female

2. What is your race? (Please circle one)
White Black Hispanic Asian Other

3. What was your annual income last year? (Please circle one)
$0-$9,999 $10,000-$19,999 $20,000-$29,999 $30,000 -$39,999
$40,000-$49,999 $50,000+

4. How often have you listened to Hip-Hop music within the past month? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

5. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that promote alcohol consumption? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

6. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that promote partying? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

7. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that promote "making money?" (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

8. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that promote women as being usable and discardable beings? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

10. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that promote using physical force in order to gain respect from others? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

11. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that promote drug use? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

12. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that promote derogatory statements against women? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

13. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that contain references of women causing "trouble" for men? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

14. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that contain references of characterizing women as "users" of men? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

15. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that contain references on the importance of participating in social/community issues? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

16. How often do you hear Hip-Hop/rap songs that contain references on the importance of being engaged in politics? (Please circle one)
Never Not very often Somewhat often Very often All the time

17. I find racial humor to be entertaining. (Please circle one)
Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

18. Race is a convenient way to categorize people. (Please circle one)
Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

19. I acknowledge race when I first see an individual. (Please circle one)
Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

20. Race plays a major role with whom I choose to associate with. (Please circle one)
Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

21. I consider myself to have a racially diverse group of friends. (Please circle one)
Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

22. Race does not exist. (Please circle one)
Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree